

RETRACTED TRACTION

The other night I was proofreading a book of mine which was about to see print after many years, and although it was generally intended as comic, there were things in it that turned me sad.

So I started to write an introductory note which would have said that, although I cannot imagine myself ever retracting, short of torture or a bribe of unlikely magnitude, anything that I had written,

still I was struck in re-reading these pages by the suffering that a writer so often causes to those whom he loves best,

and that I was happy that those whom I had hurt had showed, in spite of me, such strength of life.

But I decided not to add the note, partly because it might not have been fair to the book itself, but partly also because it occurred to me that the wrong people, ones to whom I have no intention of apologizing, would probably assume they were the loved ones I had hurt.

JOHN WAYNE

i may have been the only liberal in america who thought john wayne deserved his academy award for true grit, dustin rico rizzo notwithstanding. he started that movie as john wayne and ended it as rooster cogburn.

incidentally, i regret that charles portis, who wrote the book, received so little credit for the movie, just as charles webb received so little credit for the graduate.

i also regret

(1) that joe namath didn't get a better shot with the rams, and

(2) that joe namath was chosen to star in
the second movie made from a charles portis book.

so what is the point of this poem,
or, better, what are the points of this poem?

simply that

- (1) john wayne was not a great actor.
- (2) john wayne was sometimes the perfect actor for a part.
- (3) acting is an overrated art anyway.
- (4) john wayne was not a great american.
- (5) i surely hope that it isn't necessary for a person to
be like john wayne in order to be an exemplary
american.
- (6) that there have been many worse americans than john
wayne.
- (7) that there have been many worse actors than john
wayne.
- (8) that frederick exley has written how much easier
it was to get in touch with john wayne
than with gloria steinem.
- (9) that i have no doubt john wayne (and probably
frederick exley too) would have been a helluva guy
to have a drink with.

AFTER THE FINAL

-- with an assist to M.

It was a bit disconcerting
when I caught a couple of the students
using torn-out pages
of the Norton Anthology of English Literature
as Zig-Zag papers.

MARIE

a large, plain, sagging woman --
jolly, nonetheless, and no doubt
much more complicated than we would have guessed --
she lived-in with my father's parents
the many years of their retirement.